

Q: This discussion has centered on various pieces of equipment, such as:

- AIM-9L missiles -- sophisticated missiles that are more advanced than their Sidewinder predecessors (able to be fired from any angle).

- Multiple ejection bomb racks -- bomb racks which greatly increase the planes' offensive capability.

- FAST-packs -- fuel tanks which would give the planes range to hit most targets in Israel.

- Air tankers.

DEPARTMENT OF STATE A/CDC/MR/
F. Schmeider 7/2/85
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What is the likelihood of the Saudis being sold all of these items?
Any combination of these items? Any other items?

A: The Administration has announced that notification will shortly be given to Congress of our intention to sell Saudi Arabia conformal fuel tanks (CFTs, or FAST-packs) and AIM-9L air-to-air missiles which will augment the defensive role of their F-15 aircraft. The Administration has also indicated a willingness to be responsive on providing the Saudis with an aerial refueling capability, and will be working with the Saudis to determine the most effective means of doing this. Finally, the Administration has made no decision concerning multiple bomb racks, but has agreed to conduct a technical study with the Saudis to determine their air-to-ground requirements for defending against the threat of invasion.

With respect to any additional items to be sold to the Saudis, the Administration has also announced a willingness to sell to Saudi Arabia aerial surveillance aircraft, subject to further determination of their specific requirements.

A point of clarification worth noting -- CFTs or FAST-packs would improve the ability of the Saudi F-15s to carry out air superiority and combat air patrol missions. They would allow the Saudis to conduct air defense missions over the oil fields and facilities of Saudi Arabia's Eastern Province from bases in the western part of the Kingdom. Without CFTs, the F-15s would have to operate from vulnerable forward bases in the east to be fully effective in any of these missions. Although with CFTs the Saudis could reach targets in Israel with reduced bomb loads from one of their three main operating bases located at Taif, the altitudes they would have to fly on such missions would make them vulnerable to Israeli defenses.